
THE
Lord Bishop of *PETERBOROUGH's*
S E R M O N
BEFORE THE
HOUSE of LORDS,
On *Monday, January 30, 1758.*

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SERMON

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House of Lords



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S E R M O N

Preached before the

HOUSE of LORDS,

IN THE
ABBEY-CHURCH of *Westminster*,

On *Monday, January 30, 1758.*

BEING THE
Day appointed to be observed as the Day of the
Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

R. Ferrick BY
RICHARD, Lord Bishop of PETERBOROUGH.

L O N D O N :

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Gates, in *Fleet-Street*. 1758.

Die Martis, 31 Januarii, 1758.

Ordered,

BY the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament assembled, That the Thanks of this House be, and are hereby, given to the Lord Bishop of *Peterborough*, for the Sermon by him preached before this House Yesterday, in the Abby-Church, *Westminster*; and he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed and published.

Ashley Cowper, Cler. Parliamentor.



appointed this solemn day of Humiliation, nor
~~would it be at all suitable to the state and~~

circumstances of the world, which rather call

upon us to apply every remedy to calm the

passions of mankind, than, by reviving any

thoughts of debate to irritate and divide

them. It is far more agreeable to the

and this design of his appointment to lament

and console with his people, which brought down

giving us of the nation, which brought down

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JAMES IV. 1.

*From whence come wars and fightings
among you? Come they not hence,
even of your lusts?*

WERE it necessary upon every return
of this Solemnity to enter into the
history of former times, with a view
to take a part in those heats and contentions
which brought on the calamity of this Day, it
might perhaps be questioned, how far it became
the wisdom of the Legislature to enjoin, or what
end of policy and good government could be
answered by continuing the observance of it:
it might indeed be a day of strife and debate,
by opening those wounds, which every good
man, for the honour of his country, would
wish to close and to forget: but neither was
this the language of that authority which first

appointed this solemn act of Humiliation, nor would it be at all suitable to the state and circumstances of the world, which rather call upon us to apply every remedy to calm the passions of mankind, than, by reviving any former subjects of debate, to irritate and inflame them. It is far more agreeable to the end and design of its appointment to lament and confess with sorrow, that they were the crying sins of the nation, which brought down this heavy judgment upon it; and it will be still our wisdom to observe it, if it teaches us to be wise by the experience of former times, and to apply to ourselves such lessons of instruction, as may best secure the peace and tranquillity of our own.

With this view I have chose the words of the text, which, as they point out to us the general source, from whence all those evils originally flow, which affect the harmony and happiness of society, so by leading us to consider, what influence it had in bringing on the evils of this Day, they may direct us to be

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upon our guard, and give us that useful admonition to attend to the important duty of watching over our own conduct: an admonition, which at this time more particularly claims the attention of every man, who has any real concern for himself, any regard for the welfare and prosperity of his country.

It is not material to inquire, what were those *wars and fightings* to which the Apostle alludes in this chapter: it will be sufficient, and of more general use to remark, that, of whatever kind they were, whether they affected the private peace of individuals, or were more extensive in disturbing the public harmony of the world, the Fountain from whence they were derived was the same, to which the experience of every age and every country has commonly ascribed the various disorders and confusions, so fatal to every thing that is good and valuable in Society. It was the want of Self-Government, of that command over the passions and affections of our nature, which is the strength and security of all happiness, public or private:

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it was the want of Virtue, that only principle which can effectually curb the unruly passions of mankind, and harmonize the world: in a word, it was the want of a true Spirit of Religion, of the mild and heavenly genius of the Gospel, which alone can smoothe the storm of Civil Discord, and bid the waves thereof to be at peace.

This perhaps the pride and passions of mankind will not suffer them to acknowledge: but upon examination it will appear to be a truth founded in the effects of the passions themselves when carried to excess, confirmed by the history of those times, which this Day brings to our view, and which, if we are not blind to what passes in the world, is more strongly enforced by our own experience.

It has been remarked, that the History of the World, take it in what period you will, is little more than an account of the various struggles and contentions of mankind; and from hence it has been concluded, that man

is by nature an enemy to man, originally formed and disposed for a State of War with the rest of his fellow-creatures: a conclusion, as injurious to the kind benevolent hand which formed us, as it is contrary to the real uncorrupted constitution of our nature. It seems indeed to be a reflection, which at first took its rise in times of public discord and distress, when He, who made it, seeing every thing around him involved in the horrors and miseries of a civil war, might, from such a gloomy view, be led to take a false and partial estimate of the true nature and constitution of man; or, if it has still its patrons, it can be only amongst those who have rooted out every seed of tenderness which Providence had sown in the human breast, and therefore feel nothing of those kind affections which were designed to warm the heart, and to break forth in a generous social regard to the happiness of the whole community.

For observe the man, in whom the principles of nature have not lost all their force,
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and you will see the influence of the social affections in every relation and circumstance of life: you will see it in the tenderness of the parent, in the filial affection of the child, in that pity and compassion, which melts at the distresses of the wretched, in that ardent love of his country, which glows in the breast of the true patriot, in that more enlarged humanity, which distinguishes the friend and lover of mankind. These are the genuine suggestions of nature, which belong to us as men: they are the kind provisions of our Creator, designed to unite us to each other in the bonds of mutual love and affection, and, if cherished and improved, form and secure the peace, the comfort, and happiness of the World.

If this then be the Constitution of nature, (and let every man ask his own heart if he does not, in some degree, feel its power and influence) it may be asked, in the language of the Apostle, *Whence then come wars and fightings among you?* They certainly make no part in the original scheme of Providence; nor do they

they flow, as from their natural source, from the frame and constitution of man: they must arise from some principle, which counteracts the social affections, from some passion or appetite carried beyond the bounds prescribed to it by nature, which, by breaking in upon the established order of society, introduces *confusion, and every evil work.*

Pursue then the inquiry, and trace the origin of civil discord to its general source, and you will find an inordinate love of Power one of those lusts and passions, which has the most dangerous influence upon the peace and tranquillity of any State.

Whether it shews itself, on one hand, in setting up extravagant claims, inconsistent with the laws of God or of Man, and, instead of protecting, attempts to triumph over the liberties of the people; or whether, on the other, it discovers an impatience of all restraint, a contempt of government, and a turbulent spirit of faction, levelling all distinctions, and

confounding that Subordination, which is necessary to the strength and stability of any people ; — in both these cases, the love of Power (call it by what name you will, let it form the tyrant or the rebel) breaks through all those boundaries, which were designed to guard and secure the public happiness, and either, by invading the rights of the Subject, introduces the miseries of Tyranny, or, by encroaching upon the prerogative of the Prince, makes way for Confusion and Anarchy, not less fatal to true liberty, not less destructive of all the ends of society, than the most despotic power of a Tyrant.

Nor are the effects of this principle accidental, peculiar only to one age or nation : look into the History of the World, and you will trace its dreadful Operations in that variety of desolation and wretchedness, which every country in some period or other has experienced. It would carry us too far to take a larger view of the several Kingdoms and Nations of the Earth, which have fallen a sacrifice

sacrifice to this destructive passion, in its two extremes of Tyranny and Licentiousness: our own Country gives us the most affecting instruction in the History of this Day's Calamity.

The Historians of those times, even they who thought the most favourably of the Royal cause, have in general acknowledg'd, that an undue exertion of Power on the part of the King, laid the foundation of those disorders, which in their progress became so fatal to Himself and to the Constitution. To this they have charged those dangerous claims of the Prerogative—those new and illegal methods of raising money by the sole Authority of the Crown, which at once struck at the root of all Liberty, and threatened the very Being of Parliaments—*those Acts of State, which, ** as the Historian tells us, *were made to supply the defects of Law*—those severities with which they were enforced, inconsistent with the genius of a free people—and those frequent and angry Dissolutions of Parliament, whenever a Spirit

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* *Cl. Hist.* Book I. Page 67.

of Liberty refused to take any share in establishing, shewed a resolution to oppose a power unknown to the Constitution. The noble Historian (tender as he may be supposed to be of the Royal Character) laments these triumphs of Power over the Law, as one principal source of the confusion that succeeded.

And yet even here a candid mind cannot help offering something by way of apology; not to defend those unconstitutional measures which can admit of no defence; not to justify those Stretches of the Prerogative, which are subversive of Liberty; but to make those allowances, which are not thought unreasonable in every other instance of human imperfection, and which therefore it would be cruel to deny to those characters only, whose situation, as it places them in a more critical scene of trial, claims and deserves the most favourable Judgment.

Let it then be observed, that it was the misfortune of the unhappy King, who by his personal

personal virtues seemed to be formed to make his people happy, to have received very early impressions in favour of such principles, as tend in their consequences to establish an unlimited Authority in the Crown: they had been the invariable rule of his Father's conduct, and came too well recommended by their agreeableness to that natural Ambition, which may be supposed to have taken hold of a young mind, struck rather with the Grandeur and State attending his advancement to the Throne, than with any perfect idea of the true Nature and Policy of the Constitution. With these Prejudices He came to the Crown, and found himself surrounded with Ministers, either ignorant of the Constitution, or averse to the Principles upon which it was founded; with Judges, the sworn Interpreters of the Law, ready to decide in favour of the most illegal claims, **upon such grounds and reasons, as every stander-by was able to swear was not Law*; with a Clergy inclined to flatter the Prince into extravagant notions of the Kingly Power, little concerned, how

* Cl. Hist. Book I. Page 69.

how fatal the compliment might be to the Liberties of the people.

In this view, whatever tenderness it may raise to the Character of the King, however it may engage us to pity His failings, to lament His misfortunes, and to admire that dignity and fortitude with which He bore them, there is nothing to vindicate those measures of Government, no plea offered to defend that arbitrary exercise of Power, which claimed to be superior to all Law; much less is there any thing to detract from the merit of those Characters, which at first appeared as the Guardians of the Constitution, as the Friends of those legal Liberties, which must stand or fall with it. The Spirit with which they were warmed in the cause of Liberty was a laudable and worthy Spirit, and well had it maintained the character, had it been true to its first principle, of setting bounds to the Prerogative, but at the same time of preserving a due veneration to the just Rights and Authority of the Sovereign:
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the only method of uniting, what never should be separated, the Dignity of the Crown, and the Liberties of the People.

It had been happy indeed, if the same Spirit, which rose to vindicate their Liberties, had been able to exert itself with the same success to prevent the abuse of them to the ambitious views of Faction and Rebellion: but how soon did they find themselves unable to direct the storm! how soon did they perceive, that another Spirit was gone forth, nourished by the shelter they had afforded, which neither their courage nor their virtue could controul or subdue!

It was then that Spirit began to appear, which only waited for the critical season of Confusion to call it forth: it was then that Faction took the lead; and the same love of Power, which had been so much apprehended and opposed as the instrument of Tyranny in the King, became too fatal an engine in the hands

hands of the People to serve the purposes of Anarchy and Licentiousness.

What were the miserable effects of this Spirit we learn from the History of those times: heated by Enthusiasm, it lost sight of every generous principle, of every social virtue, of all regard to the peace and real interest of the Kingdom. Whatever concessions were made by the King, whatever grievances redressed, whatever securities offered for the future, all were ineffectual to check and controul it, or to bring men to think seriously of preserving that Constitution, which was the common Blessing of them all.

Then were thy Arms, O Britain! which deserved a better cause, shamefully turned against thyself; then were thy fields stained with the blood of the bravest of thy sons, and thy country, secure against every foreign enemy, left to fall, as it were, by its own hands: for then it was, that men, made desperate by a

Spirit of bitterness and revenge, set themselves to compleat the ruin of the State, and, by the murder of the King, with all the form and mock-solemnity of Justice, destroyed the whole frame of their antient Constitution, the Religion, the Laws, and Liberties of their country.

For where were these to be found in that dark scene of Confusion which followed? Religion, then only worthy of a God of Truth and Order, when it is a decent and rational Service, was lost in that variety of absurd sects and opinions, which sprung up and died away again, as they served the purposes of Faction, or the wild extravagance of the Enthusiast: the Laws, then only a Guard and Security, when they are suffered to have their free course, were tortured to speak the language of Oppression, or became a dead letter, of no Authority to controul the Licentiousness of Power: Liberty, then only a Blessing to a Nation when it is the Child of Law, and grows up under its shelter and protection, could not long maintain its health and vigour under the Usurpation of one,

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who, however He might merit the glory of spreading the terror of the British name, by a genius and courage peculiarly fitted for War, could not, by all his art or address, secure the affections of the people; and therefore found it necessary to exercise his Authority rather with the rigour and severity of a Tyrant, than with the temper and gentleness of a Legal Monarch.

Nor was Liberty safer in any of the changes, which succeeded: the Tyrant indeed was changed, but the Tyranny was still the same, still carried on with the same Confusion in the State, the same Folly and Enthusiasm in the Church, and at last made even some of those, who had been concerned in raising the Spirit of Faction, cry out and lament, * *When we looked for Liberty, behold Slavery! when we expected Righteousness, behold Oppression!*

Thus fatal to the Prince and to the People was the love of Power carried to excess in the History of this Day's Calamity.

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* Cl. Hist. Book XV. Page 630.

It might seem unnecessary to search for any other source of public Confusion, when this, which has been already mentioned, appears to have so large a share in disturbing the peace and happiness of Society. But there is another passion or appetite, which, where-ever it prevails, will always have the same influence: it had its influence in bringing on the evils of this Day: I mean that sensual indulgence, which breaks out into all the excesses of Luxury and a vain Extravagance.

It is the natural effect of this Lust or Passion to enslave the man, to engage all his thoughts and attention, to check every generous sentiment, which might carry him to be useful to the Public, or to promote in any degree the happiness of his fellow-creatures. The man, immersed in Sensuality, has little leisure, less inclination, and seldom any abilities to exert himself in the service of his Country: at best therefore he is an useless burthen of the State, neither in counsel or action qualified to give it any real Strength or Support. It

would be happy if he was equally incapable of injuring his Country in its most essential interests: but Luxury, as it advances in riot and intemperance, ends in poverty and distress: it then flies to every method of supporting itself by rapine and injustice; and at last, grown mutinous and discontented, endeavours to spread a general confusion, that it may share in the spoil, and repair its own shatter'd fortunes by preying upon the Public.

This we are told by the Historian was the case in the times we are now lamenting: * *Debts, says he, contracted by the Nobility and Gentry, and the wants and temptations they found themselves exposed to from their unlimited expence, did very much contribute to the kindling that fire, which shortly after broke out in so terrible a combustion.*

The Increase of Commerce in the century before those unhappy times had abundantly supplied the means of Luxury, and the enjoyment

ment of Peace given them leisure to study and improve the various refinements of Pleasure: hence that excess of vanity and unbounded expence, which was unknown to former times, introduced at first to do honour to the King in his progress through the Kingdom, but * *which*, we are assured, *was carried on afterwards to the great damage and mischief of the nation, in their estates and manners*: for from hence, either they grew regardless of the Public, gave little attention to the interest of their Country, saw it making hasty advances to its destruction, and were too indolent to give an helping hand to save it, or, ruin'd by their expences, and pleasing themselves with the thought of making their advantage in the struggle, contributed to keep up the storm by sowing the seeds of Faction, till they grew up and choak'd every principle of Virtue, all regard to National Honour, all concern and love for their Country.

How far the same evil affections, which we have lamented as the source of the Calamities
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* *Cl. Hist.* Book I. Page 78.

of former times, contribute to the dangers of our own, it becomes us to consider with that seriousness, which the importance of the subject demands from us; for we have still our dangers, and it is the proper instruction of this Day's Solemnity to guard against them.

It is our Happiness indeed (and we acknowledge it with a due sense of Gratitude) that we have in one view nothing to alarm our fears—no danger from any oppressive claims in the Crown—none from Counsellors and Advisers, who wish to shew their zeal in supporting the Regal Authority, by being at the same time the steady Friends and Patrons of Liberty—none from Judges, the best qualified by their Abilities to be the Guardians and Interpreters of the Laws, by their Integrity to be the equal and impartial Dispensers of them to the People—none from a Clergy, disposed to pay the cheerful Obedience of happy Subjects to the best of Kings, but giving no countenance, either in their examples or their doctrines, to those slavish principles, which would give up their Liberties to

the worst. These are not the dangers of our times: the Revolution, that æra of British Liberty, has ascertained the limits of the power of the Crown, and the rights of the Subject; and the experience of a Reign, indulged to us by the particular favour of Providence, ought to convince us, that we have the best guard against any illegal exertions of the Prerogative, in the Temper, the Moderation, the Honour of the Prince upon the Throne.

Our danger is from ourselves—from that Spirit of Licentiousness which sets itself above the Laws, and, levelling all the national fences of Authority, threatens to let in upon us that madness of the people, which, if not check'd in its progress, must shake the very Foundations of all Government.

From whence this Spirit took its rise, is not perhaps so hard to determine, as what are the proper means to quell and subdue it. It is the natural growth of those licentious principles, which, taking advantage of that Tenderness for Liberty,

Liberty, the boasted privilege of our Constitution, have had too much success in propagating their influence without controul, till at last they have set men loose from every restraint of Religion and Government, by persuading them, that they have a strength within themselves, if they would exert it, superior to every other Authority: a fatal Doctrine, which, however it might affect to breathe the Spirit of Liberty, must have met with more Virtue and Honesty, than is generally observed to belong to the bulk of mankind, if it had not encouraged and produced what we now feel and lament, a Spirit of Faction and the most dissolute Licentiousness.

This has been the progress of our Distemper; but where is the skilful hand that can apply the remedy to cure it? This must depend on a firm and hearty Union of the best and wisest men, in giving life and spirit to the Laws—in supporting the zeal and courage of those who execute them—in being examples themselves of a steady attention to the Authority of Government

vernment in their own conduct—in rewarding and protecting Virtue and Integrity in every station—in punishing and discouraging Vice, as the enemy of all order, and in every view as fatal to the Liberties of the People, as it is destructive of the real Strength and Security of Government. The Times call for such an Union; and they are the best Friends of their Country, who wish and exert all their influence to confirm and strengthen it.

But neither is this Licentiousness of the people the only danger, which threatens and alarms us: the same Luxury, the same Vanity of expence, which had their share in bringing on the evils of former times, furnish matter of serious reflection, when we consider, to how great a degree they are the prevailing Vices of our own.

We hear complaints indeed of the badness of the times, of the large demands of war, of a less plentiful provision of the necessaries of life: but where do we see any one article of

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extravagance abated? where do we trace any marks of that frugality, which the times call for, and which indeed is the best method of making them better? Our pleasures are still as expensive, our vanities and follies indulged at as high a rate, as if the times were happy and prosperous, *as if our garners were full and plenteous, and peace was in all our borders.*

And what do we see in consequence of this? a general inattention to every important concern of human life, and an intire disregard to every principle, which can give any real Dignity to the Character. Hence it is that every Nursery of Vice and Folly is encouraged and frequented, whilst the proper scenes for enlarging and improving the mind, and qualifying men to be the support and ornament of their Country, have little share of their thoughts and attention. Hence it is that the sacred offices of Religion give way to every vain Amusement, which the humour and folly of the times have made fashionable, and a Day set apart by the Laws of God and of Man for preserving some sense of

of a Deity in the world, is perverted to every idle purpose of pleasure and diversion: and from hence it is that men go on without any serious thought or reflection, grow forgetful of themselves, are too indolent, or rather too much afraid to attend to their own most important concerns, till Distress forces them to feel the consequences of their folly: and then what can be expected, but that, oppressed by the stinging sense of their own wants and necessities, and having no check of Religion or Conscience to restrain them, they should fly to every method of support, however disgraceful to the Character, however destructive to the true interests of their Country?

Against this danger, how weak are all the efforts of human policy to give us any security! we may boast of our Laws, and pride ourselves in the excellent frame of our Constitution, as the best internal strength, which the wisdom and experience of ages could possibly form: we may please ourselves with our situation, and place our confidence in that rampart of
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Nature which surrounds us, as the best external guard, which the favour of Providence could possibly give us: but what protection are any of these against ourselves? what strength can they give to oppose our passions and our vices, enemies of all others the most alarming to Liberty and every other Blessing?

Our only guard against these, our only principle of safety, must be drawn from the influence of Religion; not of that Enthusiasm and Hypocrisy, which under the mask of Religion became a spirit of Sedition, and pleaded the cause of God, as its Authority, for every excess of injustice and cruelty; not of that bitter spirit of Bigotry, which employs and actuates every destructive passion of our nature; but of that Religion, which laying its foundation deep in the heart, there fixes the strongest guard against every corrupt affection that may weaken and undermine it. It is this, the genuine Spirit of the Gospel, which, diffused through the society by the influence of the higher ranks and degrees of life, would give us real strength,

strength, and inspire us with the best principles to exert it: it would restore that just regard and reverence of the Civil Powers, which are necessary to give vigour to the Laws, and to support the Authority of Government: it would revive and encourage a spirit of National Virtue, a spirit of Sobriety and Industry, a spirit of Bravery and true Fortitude, of that Courage and Greatness of Soul, which Religion, and nothing but Religion, can possibly give.

In a word, it will secure to us the Protection of that Providence, without whom nothing is strong, without whose aid all the wisdom of the wise is weakness and folly; of that God, who in all the convulsions of the world will be our Stay and Support, who alone is able and will conduct us to that Peace, which no Lust or Passion can interrupt or destroy, which will be all Harmony and Happiness for ever.

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